

The Arboretum Bulletin



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Notes on Garden Annuals

By JOHN H. HANLEY

A FEW hints on the proper way to handle flowers of different kinds often helps the gardener develop a better looking home grounds. It is always disappointing to have one of your key beds fail for lack of a thread of knowledge which is not always readily available. In the growing of annual flowers, for example, one finds that some respond entirely differently than others to accepted methods of handling. Take the matter of transplanting—the growth of some varieties is checked abruptly and almost completely by being carelessly dug from the seed bed and placed in their final position. There seems to be much difference in the way they respond depending upon the type of plant. One would not hesitate to transplant a petunia—any slowing up of growth would be only very temporary. However, other kinds seem never to get started after such a check. If the gardener is made aware in advance of any such tendency he can easily avoid it. The purpose of these notes is to list those types which should not be transplanted and to present a means for overcoming the difficulty. Here are the typical plants which do not bear up well when they are transplanted: dianthus, the annual garden pinks; salpiglossis, the hound's tongue; the annual poppies (perennial poppies also dislike transplanting); the close poppy relatives, eschscholtzia and hunnemannia; calliopsis, the so-called annual coreopsis; gypsophila or baby's breath; the annual phloxes; portulaca, the rose moss; and Calceolaria and Bartonia.

Obviously the easiest way to avoid any failure that may be due to transplanting would be to plant the seeds right where they are to bloom. Ordinarily this means much more careful preparation of the soil so that the best possible seedbed is obtained. One may also find it desirable to erect a temporary shade over the planting if it is done too late or if the weather turns off dry much earlier than usual as it did this season.

Another method of handling these types can be used effectively when there is greenhouse space available. Start the seeds early and transplant the seedlings to small pots when they are young enough to recover from the shock immediately. The roots which develop as the seedling grows are completely confined within the pot and are not disturbed too much in the later transplanting to the flower bed. Ordinarily one expects better success if all transplanting is done as early in the spring as possible.

Another Viewpoint on the Case of the Native Rhododendron

By M. J. FORSELL

SEVERAL years have now rolled by since the native rhododendron was given legal protection. Still more recently greater interest in the plant has been generated until now we have under way established tours to view

this plant in its native habitat. This is all well and good. Attendant with this publicity is also a growing sinister practice which is not new but decidedly on the increase. All of which prompts me to offer these few lines in condemnation and protest.

Upon seeing a native rhododendron in bloom in the woods, it is almost everyone's general reaction to have one transplanted. Noble as such an inspiration may be toward ornamentation of one's living surroundings, the use of the native rhododendron for such a purpose has many elements about it which is poor horticultural practice. Too often this malicious transplanting is attempted by the passing motorist who, without the proper knowledge or equipment, merely takes a chance that the plant might grow.

Far greater offender is the professional native rhododendron bootlegger. He may obtain his plants honorably by purchase, but the buyer is due for disappointment in the end. If he is a keen observer he will in a few years or even in the first year, discover that the transplanted native is a weak grower, giving paltry blooms, as compared with grafted plants that might be bought in the legitimate markets. It is realized that these lines will probably not reach those who may have had the temptation or have been guilty, but it is hoped that the readers of this article will take up the idea above outlined through proper channels in emphasizing how much more the efforts will be rewarded by using other species, hybrid seedlings or grafted varieties in preference to trying to domesticate the natives.

The Pink Dogwood

(EDITOR'S NOTE: All gardeners in the Northwest, and in particular those who are members of the Arboretum Foundation, will find the following article most interesting. Mr. Reginald H. Parsons, outstanding Seattle business man, is one of the Arboretum's true supporters. His family has long been prominently associated with things horticultural. Now comes evidence, presented below, that the beautiful pink dogwood which so many of you enjoy around your homes, was introduced to gardeners by the Parsons Nursery, Flushing, N. Y., as early as 1887. This nursery was owned and operated by Mr. Samuel B. Parsons, grandfather of our Mr. Reginald H. Parsons. The Parsons nursery was responsible for many other introductions including the Japanese maples and the Asiatic rhododendrons. The following information is taken from Bulletin No. 34 of "*The Hemlock Arboretum at Far Country*," near Philadelphia, published by Mr. Charles F. Jenkins, who owns and operates that arboretum.)

THE pink dogwood controversy mentioned in the last BULLETIN has now been settled. In that Adolph Miller was quoted as saying that Thomas Meehan, eminent botanist and nurseryman (1826-1901), of Germantown, was

the discoverer of this charming variation and that he had found it growing in the nearby Wissahickon Valley. Samuel N. Baxter, Arboriculturist and landscape gardener for Fairmount Park, immediately took issue with this statement. Adolph Miller replied that J. Howes Humphreys, vice-president of the Andorra Nurseries, had told him so and that Mr. Humphreys knew. On the evening of January 15th, the principals gathered at "Far Country" for a court of inquiry with the "Keeper" of the Hemlock Arboretum sitting as judge. Mr. Humphreys came around with the nursery catalogues of the well-known Andorra Nurseries from the very first, in 1890.

Mr. Baxter had made a trip to Boston, that center of botanical and horticultural knowledge and consulted the files and the old nursery catalogues in the library of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. He came back loaded with ammunition. He produced an excerpt from the catalogue of the old Parsons Nursery at Flushing, N. Y., and found that in 1887 they were offering two-year, grafted plants, 24 to 30 inches high, at \$12.50 for ten plants. Also a clipping from Florists Exchange, dated May 30, 1914, in which Joseph Meehan, brother of Thomas, told of the new and sensational variety but made no mention that his brother, Thomas, had discovered it. On the contrary, he gave Parsons & Sons credit for introducing it, from a plant found in Virginia. Joseph Meehan continues "the addition of this pink variety gives three varieties to the credit of the southern states, the weeping one, Baltimore, the pink from Virginia and now the double white one from North Carolina." Numerous other bits of evidence were produced showing that botanists had known of the pink dogwood, particularly in Virginia, since 1731. Adolph Muller himself presented a statement which would seem to indicate that Thomas Meehan had secured his original nursery stock from a seedling growing at Rosemont, Pa., "40 to 50 years ago."

Mr. Baxter introduced the letter books of the head gardener of the Fairmount Park Commission showing that they had ordered in 1887 two plants of *Cornus florida rubra* from the Parsons Nursery and he had reason to believe that one of these was still growing near Horticultural Hall, Philadelphia. Mr. Humphreys said, from his experience, the color of these dogwoods varied from year to year and it was deeper in those years when the spring was backward and we had abundant rainfall.

So over the corona perfectos and the cider and pretzels, the judge summed up the evidence by saying that Thomas Meehan may have found a pink dogwood growing in the Wissahickon Valley and Mr. Humphrey had heard of this incident. That it was clearly demonstrated that *Cornus florida rubra* had been well known to scientists for now over two hundred years, and that its introduction in modern times had been first through the Parsons and then the Meehan nurseries.

Lachenalias

By DUANE O. CRUMMETT

LACHENALIAS, or Cape Cowslips, as they are commonly called, are among the choicest plants of the lily family for cultivation indoors and it is regrettable that they are not more widely grown. Although they were introduced to cultivation in 1752, over half a century before the advent of freezias, yet they are strangely uncommon, even today. They are so easy to grow, so distinctive and varied in form and color, remain in bloom over such a long period of time, and take so amicably to indoor conditions that anyone who is willing to become acquainted with this interesting genus will be well repaid with an abundance of vivid beauty in the early months of the year.

There are about fifty species of *Lachenalias*, all native of South Africa, and a number of varieties and hybrids add to the horticultural value of the genus. They all have oval Scilla-like bulbs, fleshy, strap-shaped green leaves, frequently blotted with purple, dark green, or red and more or less erect scapes, each with fifteen to forty elegant tubular flowers.

Lachenalias may be grown in flats, seed pans, standard or azalea pots, or any similar container. They are also particularly charming when grown in hanging wire baskets, the pendant habit of the flowers and foliage then showing to advantage. The bulbs should be planted preferably in July, August or early September, but they may be planted later, at intervals, to provide a continuous period of bloom over several months of the year.

The quality of flowers produced, however, is generally better from the earlier plantings. A mixture of two to three parts of loam, one part each of leaf mold and well decayed cow manure, with enough sand to keep the whole porous, will provide a good growing medium for the plants.

When planting in pots, add plenty of coarse drainage material in the bottom before the soil is added. If using baskets, first line them with fresh moss, then fill the interior with the soil mixture into which the bulbs are placed all around the sides as well as the top. The bulbs may be placed quite close together and should be covered with one-half to one inch of the soil mixture. Water well and place the containers in a cold frame or in any cool, light, well-ventilated location, preferably where the temperature will be below 50 degree F. most of the time but above freezing. The cooler they are grown the more sturdy will be the flower stalks. Water sparingly until the leaves appear and more abundantly as growth advances.

As soon as the flower spikes appear the plants may be brought into a cool greenhouse, sunporch, or cool, well-lighted room. From the time when the flower stalks appear until the leaves begin to turn yellow after flowering, generous quantities of water should be supplied. It is advisable to feed with weak liquid manure or nutrient solution during this period at weekly intervals. *Lachenalias* should not be forced until the flower spikes are plainly visible and even then they will produce better flowers if they remain in a cool environment. They resent high temperatures even more than freezias. With cool treatment the flowering period of each planting will last four to eight weeks. They also have extensive keeping qualities as cut flowers.

After the leaves begin to age, gradually withhold water until the soil becomes dry. Thorough ripening of the bulbs is essential and is best secured by placing the dry pots in a sunny location where they will be protected from any moisture until the following July or August.

Lachenalias may be repotted each year or can be grown several years in the same container. Since the bulbs increase readily each year in most species, stock may be increased by shaking them free of the old soil in July and grading them into several sizes, the larger ones being set aside for potting again and the smaller ones grown in flats to make flowering bulbs in a year or two.

Cutting of the bulbs before planting, from the bottom upward, halfway through the thickness of the bulb in the form of a cross, is recommended as a means of increasing the number of bulblets produced in those species that do not ordinarily multiply readily. Leaf cuttings placed in a propagation case have also been employed in some species as a means of propagation, numerous bulblets forming at the base of each leaf in four to six weeks.

Many species produce seed abundantly and fresh seed germinated at a temperature of about 60 degrees F. will produce flowering plants in one to three years and furnishes another ready means of propagation.

These charming plants are divided into two distinct groups, those with flowers growing at right angles to the stalk and those which are more or less pendulous. Those in the former group are early flowering, generally being in blossom by December or January if planted in August. The following are the species most frequently cultivated in this group: *Lachenalia Boundii*, which produces numerous large spikes of long, vermillion, tubular flowers covered with a bluish bloom, the petals tipped with green on stems twelve inches or more tall. It has dark green foliage spotted with dull reddish brown. *Lachenalias pendula* and *Lachenalia pendula superba* are of similar appearance, being slightly more dwarf, having somewhat smaller flowers and commencing to blossom later. The latter variety is the one most commonly listed in American catalogs.

In the second group there are many species of outstanding merit. The following few will indicate the remarkable diversity and range of color that is available:

- L. Nelsonii*—Golden yellow flowers, the best of the yellow varieties and the one most commonly grown in this group; leaves large and beautifully spotted.
- L. Canada*—Flowers primrose-yellow; petals tinged with green; foliage clear green devoid of blotches; rose "bloom" on stems.
- L. purpurea-caerulea*—Striking species with small, lavender and deep violet flowers carried on 15-inch spikes.
- L. tricolor quadricolor*—Large flowers in four shades of red, greenish yellow and green.
- L. aurea gigantea*—Rich golden yellow flowers fading to a dull purple.
- L. glaucina*—Flowers long; white, red, or blue, depending on variety.
- L. Roodiae*—One of the most handsome species with hyacinth blue flowers marked with reddish-purple and with a green blotch at the tip of each outer segment; stamens blue with red anthers which become bright yellow at maturity.
- L. orchiodes*—Variable species with fragrant, white, yellow, red or blue flowers, depending on variety.
- L. liliflora*, *L. pallida* and *L. uniflora*—All with white flowers.

In addition to the species and varieties mentioned there are many named hybrids which frequently excel the species in beauty of color and form.

Growing Cactus From Seeds

By R. W. KELLY
Temple City, Calif.

CACTI are the most diversified in form and appearance of any group of plants. There are midget forms no larger than a thimble, giants as large as trees, round ones, fat ones, skinny ones the size of a pencil, snaky ones which twine around trees in a most serpentine manner, wicked spiny ones which shout "Don't touch" in any language and soft dainty ones as white and delicate as milady's powder puff.

And as for flowers—cacti bear the most gorgeous variety of colors imaginable, from snowy white to golden yellow through deepest reds and often with two- or three-tone combinations of various shades. Strange as it may seem, a cactus no larger than your finger (*Selenicereus*, meaning moon *Cereus*) bears the largest flower of all. Many of the smaller kinds will bloom the second or third season after planting and the size of some of the blossoms in comparison with the plant size will prove a pleasant surprise. Some are so fragrant that a single blossom will fill a room with an exotic perfume.

To start seedlings is easy—simply screen equal parts of sand and leaf mold through a quarter-inch screen, mix a

smaller amount of garden loam and add a little charcoal. Put the mixture into a pot, pan or nursery flat with one or more holes or cracks in the bottom for drainage. A layer of small gravel in the bottom improves the drainage which is most essential. Press the soil smooth, sow the seeds thickly on top and cover with coarse sand or small pea size gravel. Set container in a pan of water until moisture appears on top, then remove and cover with a glass pane shaded to keep out direct sunlight. Keep at a temperature of 65 to 80 degrees F. and keep moist until germination starts. Then raise the glass by placing a match under the edge and give a little more light. If seedlings turn reddish, they have too much light. If damping-off (a fungus) appears, dust or spray with a good fungicide. Or, better yet, sterilize the soil by pouring boiling water through it before planting seed or bake it in the oven if you can get away with it!

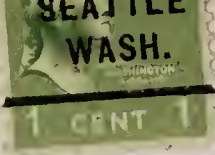
The first seeds start in about a week and appear as tiny round or elongated green beads tipped by two small cotyledons or seed leaves. Shortly thereafter the first tiny spines or bristles appear from the center and then more and more appear until the seedling begins to take form and can be recognized as belonging to the columnar or globular type of cactus.

Transplanting may be done as soon as the first spines grow, but if the seedlings are not too crowded, they may be left until the globular kinds are the size of peas or the tall kinds are half an inch high. The first transplanting should be made into a soil mixture about the same as the planting soil except that more garden loam should be included—about equal parts of sand, leaf mold (peat or sphagnum moss may be substituted) and loam with a trace of lime. A top dressing of coarse sand or small gravel helps the appearance and permits air to circulate through the soil.

Keep in mind that roots need air and use rather coarse materials to keep the soil porous and friable. Seedlings should be slightly damp at all times, but not soaking wet. After they have grown in the above mixture for a month or so, light applications of very weak liquid manure or soluble balanced fertilizers may be used to force growth, but use only when the plants are making new growth.

Eucommia Ulmoides

THERE have been a number of attempts made in the United States to introduce plant species which would yield large enough quantities of rubber-producing latex to make the commercial production of rubber economically worthwhile in the more northerly latitudes. To our knowledge such a species has not as yet been discovered, although small amounts have been extracted from several plants, both woody and herbaceous. One of the species so tried was *Eucommia ulmoides*, a tree that was imported from central China. Although the quantity of rubber that could be taken from the tree was too small to warrant commercial plantings for that purpose, it has subsequently become valuable for ornamental purposes. As one would understand from the species name, the tree resembles an elm, at least superficially. The leaves are relatively large, rough above, slightly pubescent below, and because they look much like those of the American elm, except for a gloss or sheen on the upper surfaces, are largely responsible for the general appearance of the whole tree. *Eucommia* is classed as a small tree, seldom exceeding 60 feet; this is advantageous for fuller landscape use on small properties. The Arboretum was fortunate to have been presented with an excellent specimen of *Eucommia ulmoides* from Mr. John Duncan, superintendent of parks in Spokane. The tree has been planted in its proper place adjoining the *Platanaceae* and should thrive here under west slope conditions.



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